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1. What is redistricting?

Redistricting is the process where district lines are redrawn within a state. This includes districts for Congress, State Board of Equalization, State Senate, State Assembly, county boards of supervisors, city councils, school boards and other districts.

Every ten years, the census count gives us a snapshot of how many people there are in the United States and where they live.

Once we know how many people live in California, we redistrict. That is, we draw new district lines that put the same number of people into each electoral district.

Redistricting ensures every person has equal representation by drawing districts with an equal number of people – one person, one vote.

Why is redistricting important to me?

Our democracy is based on voters choosing elected representatives who will listen to and serve the interests of constituents. How a district is drawn can determine who runs for election and whether communities have a voice in choosing their representatives.

Public participation in map-drawing is critical to ensuring that communities have the strongest voice possible to express their preferences. When voters with similar interests are drawn into a district together, their voices multiply giving them a greater opportunity to express their views, elect candidates of their choice and hold their leaders accountable.

Speaking up about your community is important to ensure that the district lines that are drawn protect your political voice.

2. What is the CA Citizens Redistricting Commission?

In 2008 and 2010, the voters passed Propositions 11 and 20. For the first time in California, a new 14-person commission called the Citizens Redistricting Commission will draw the district maps of:

- 53 congressional districts
- 40 State Senate districts
- 80 State Assembly districts
- 4 Board of Equalization Districts

The Citizens Redistricting Commission (“the Commission”) met for the first time in January 2011. The Commission will hold meetings around California to listen to residents describe their communities, neighborhoods, and what issues are important to them. Based on the public input, the commission will draw new district maps. The Commission has until August 15, 2011 to approve final district lines.

For more information about what the Citizens Redistricting Commission is doing, visit the official site:

www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov

3. How can I get involved?

There are lots of ways you can get involved.

1. **Go to a Commission Public Input Hearing.** The Commissioners want to hear from you. They can't do their job without you. Hearings will be held throughout the state, more than 30 in all. Tell the Commissioners about your community. (Go to page 8 for more info on talking about your community).
2. **Get outside help!**
 - You can visit one of 6 redistricting assistance sites to use special software and receive assistance in mapping your community. (Go to page __ for the list).
 - To use free software to draw a map of your community, go to www.WeDrawCA.org.
 - For these and other resources, check out www.RedistrictingCA.org.

4. What criteria must the Commissioners consider when drawing district maps?

The Citizens Redistricting Commission must draw maps that follow these criteria and in this priority order:

- 1) **Draw districts with equal population.**
- 2) **Comply with the federal Voting Rights Act.** This means that districts should be drawn to ensure minority voters have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. (Go to page 7 for a description).
- 3) **Draw districts that are contiguous.** This means that a district should be connected at all points.
- 4) **Respect counties, cities, communities of interest, and neighborhoods,** where possible.
- 5) Draw districts to be compact, where practicable. This rule should only be applied after the other earlier criteria have been satisfied.
- 6) Draw districts to nest within each other, where practicable. That means:
 - 1 Senate district contains 2 Assembly districts
 - 1 Board of Equalization district contains 10 Senate districts.This rule should only be applied after the other criteria have been satisfied.

Additionally, the Commission may not consider an incumbent or political candidate's residence in creating a district. The Commission shall not draw districts for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against an incumbent, political candidate or political party.

See California Constitution, Article XXI, SEC. 2 (d) for the full language.

5. What is the Voting Rights Act and why is it important?

Before the Voting Rights Act was passed, the practice of many states was to require qualified African Americans to pass literacy tests in order to register to vote. Other states only allowed a person to register to vote if his or her grandfather was allowed to vote. The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 to outlaw these practices.

In the 1970s, Congress heard extensive testimony about how state and local governments drew district lines and manipulated elections rules to prevent newly-registered African American voters from being able to elect candidates. Today, the Voting Rights Act protects all racial and language minorities, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The California Constitution mandates that the Citizens Redistricting Commission draw lines that comply with the Voting Rights Act. The Commission will consider public input and legal and expert advice to meet the Voting Rights Act requirements.

For a more detailed description of how the Voting Rights Act works, visit the U.S. Department of Justice at: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/redistricting.php>.

6. What is a Community of Interest?

The California Constitution defines a community of interest as:

A community of interest is a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Examples of such shared interests are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area, or an agricultural area, and those common to areas in which the people share similar living standards, use the same transportation facilities, have similar work opportunities, or have access to the same media of communication relevant to the election process. Communities of interest shall not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

- Section 2(d)(4) of Article XXI of the California Constitution

How do I talk about my community?

Imagine you are describing your community to a visitor from out of town. You might talk about the kind of people who live in your community, important issues, community centers, and your community's history.

You should also describe where your community is – use streets or GPS points or landmarks. Showing a map can be helpful to your description (go to page ____).

Here is a quick checklist of things to consider including in your presentation about your community:

1. Census and demographic data about the residents of your community.
2. Important places, such as parks, cultural centers, religious or government buildings, a commercial area, schools or clubs.
3. Issues or traditions that bring residents together such as where to locate a new road or transit line or where to open a school, or traditions such as a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day march.
4. Important stakeholders who represent different parts of the community.
5. Be clear about the boundaries of your community. You can use street intersections or geographic markers.

8. Where can I get outside help?

It is very helpful to present maps of your community to the Commission. With a map and a marker, you can outline what you consider to be your community boundaries.

Or you can map your community using a computer. There are a number of organizations that are providing redistricting assistance.

You can get help with drawing community maps or getting data about your community by visiting a **Redistricting Assistance Sites**:

- **Berkeley:** UC Berkeley Law, 2850 Telegraph Ave, Suite 471, Berkeley, CA 94705-7220
Manager: Ms. Tamina Alon, talon@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 3-9pm, Thur 3-9pm, Sat 9am-4pm and by appointment
- **Sacramento:** Central Library, 2nd Fl. Conference Rm., 828 I St., Sacramento, CA 95814
Manager: Ms. Robin Evans, raevans@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 2-8pm, Thur 2-8pm, Sat 10am-5pm and by appointment
- **Fresno:** 1713 Tulare St, Suite 130, Fresno, CA 93721
Manager: Mr. Troy Mattson, tmattson@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 3-9pm, Thur 3-9pm, Sat 9am-4pm and by appointment
- **Los Angeles:** 3167 #F, South Hoover St, Los Angeles, CA 90007
Manager: Mr. Richard Yarnes, rdyarnes@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 3-9pm, Thur 3-9pm, Sat 9am-4pm and by appointment
- **San Bernardino:** 475A S. Arrowhead Ave, San Bernardino, CA, 92408
Manager: Mr. John Lavalley, jlavalley@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 3-9pm, Thur 3-9pm, Sat 9am-4pm and by appointment
- **San Diego:** 588 Euclid Ave. , San Diego, CA 92114
Manager: Mr. Thomas McDowell, thominsd@law.berkeley.edu
Hours: Wed 3-9pm, Thur 3-9pm, Sat 9am-4pm and by appointment

You can also visit www.WeDrawCA.org for free online software to draw your own community maps.

For a list of resources provided by various groups, visit www.RedistrictingCA.org.

8. Public Hearing Schedule

9. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the Commission?

A. Every 10 years, after the federal census, California must redraw the boundaries of its Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts, to reflect the new population data. Now those lines will be drawn by the Commission. California voters authorized the creation of the Commission when they passed the Voters First Act, which appeared as Proposition 11 on the November 2008 general election ballot. Under the Act, the Commission is charged with drawing the boundaries of California's Congressional, Senate, Assembly and Board of Equalization electoral districts.

Q. How many Commission members are there?

A. The commission has 14 members from varied ethnic backgrounds and geographic locations in the state and includes five Democrats, five Republicans, and four Decline to State.

Q. What was the process of becoming a member of the Commission?

A. When the applications became available, interested parties submitted their applications online. Applicants who affirmed in their applications that they met all of the qualifications in the Act for serving on the Commission, and did not have a "conflict of interest" were invited to submit a supplemental application containing additional information about their qualifications.

Q. How were the members of the Commission selected after the application period closed?

Interested parties submitted their application online. Applicants who met the qualifications in the Act and did not have a "conflict of interest" were invited to submit a supplemental application in which they answered essay questions providing insight into their professional experience, awareness of California's diversity, and their reasons for wanting to serve on the Commission.

Three independent auditors from the Bureau of State Audits reviewed the applications and selected 120 of the most qualified applicants to be interviewed in Sacramento. The 120 applicants were divided into 3 sub-pools: 40 Democrats, 40 Republicans, and 40 who were neither Democrats nor Republicans.

Following the interviews, the total pool was reduced to 60, again with equal sub-pools. Those 60 names were sent to the leadership of both houses of the Legislature, where the leaders exercised their right under the Act to remove up to 24 applicants from the pool.

On November 18, 2010, the State Auditor randomly drew the names of 3 Democrats, 3 Republicans and 2 Decline to State applicants and they became the first 8 members of the Commission. Subsequently, on December 15, 2010, the first 8 selected the final 6 commissioners, choosing 2 Democrats, 2 Republicans and 2 Decline to State.

Q. Will Commission members be paid?

The Act specifies that members of the Commission will be compensated at the rate of \$300 for each day a commissioner is engaged in Commission business. The Act also allows for reimbursement for personal expenses incurred in connection with the duties required of commissioners.

Q How long will Commission members serve?

The Act states that the Commission will serve for 10 years, however, most of the work that the commissioners will perform should be completed by the time they approve the maps of the new districts, which is required by August 15, 2011.

Q. How can we find out more about the Commissioners' backgrounds?

A. Brief bios of the Commissioners are posted at wedrawthelines.com. The Commissioners' very exhaustive supplemental applications are also posted as well as their financial disclosure statements.

Q. What is the difference between reapportionment and redistricting?

A. Reapportionment is the permanent process by which seats in the US House of Representatives are redistributed among the 50 states according to each census. Redistricting is the process of drawing district lines which means changing the boundaries every ten years following the census.

Q. Why should Californians have confidence that 14 Commissioners who are unelected and therefore unaccountable to the voters be able to produce district boundaries that are in the voters' best interests?

A. It was the voters themselves that took the job of redistricting out of the elected legislators hands because of their frustration with a process which served to protect incumbents. The voters supported a new process which would choose 14 citizens with a myriad of backgrounds, skills and from varied geographic locations to draw district boundaries based on criteria designed to preserve communities of interest.

Q. Why should I care about redistricting?

A. One of the greatest powers that the people have is the right to elect their own representatives to conduct the business of their government. How the district boundaries are configured can make the difference between empowering and maximizing the voters' voices or minimizing and muting those voices. The independent Citizens Redistricting Commission is committed to drawing fair districts that reflect the best interests of the people not the incumbent political parties.

Q. Won't legislators be working behind the scenes to influence Commissioners and take control of the redistricting process?

A. The Voters First Act is very clear that no communication between legislators and Commissioners regarding redistricting issues can occur. Any comment from legislators must take place in a public Commission meeting--just like any other citizen.

Q. What criteria will the Commission consider in deciding the districts?

A. The criteria for the Commission to follow is laid out in the Act:

- Districts must be of equal population to comply with the US Constitution.
- Districts must comply with the Voting Rights Act to ensure that minorities have an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.
- Districts must be contiguous so that all parts of the district are connected to each other.
- Districts must respect the boundaries of cities, counties, neighborhoods and communities of Interest, and minimize their division, to the extent possible.
- Districts should be geographically compact, that is, have a fairly regular shape.
- Where practicable each Senate District should be comprised of two complete and adjacent Assembly Districts and Board of Equalization districts shall be composed of 10 complete and adjacent State Senate Districts.
- Districts shall not be drawn to favor or discriminate against an incumbent, candidate, or political party.

Q. What is the Voting Rights Act and why is it important?

A. Before the Voting Rights Act was passed, the practice of many states was to require qualified African Americans to pass literacy tests in order to register to vote. Other states only allowed a person to register to vote if his or her grandfather was allowed to vote. The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 to outlaw these practices.

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- Section 2(d)(4) of Article XXI of the California Constitution

Q. Does the Act require that districts be more competitive, rather than dominated by one political party?

A: No. Historically, districts were drawn to favor incumbents and this naturally led to dominance by one political party. Under the Act, districts must be drawn to maximize voters' opportunity to elect representatives of their own choosing, and this may lead to more competitive races

Q. Can't this whole process be done by a computer program?

A: The Commission is relying on the active participation of citizens across California to weigh in on how the districts should be drawn, since information about "communities of interest" is not collected in the Census. This is an open conversation that will assist the Commission in evaluating citizen input and exercising responsible judgment about what districts should look like – a computer could never do that

Q: What is the difference between the Commission's work and what was done in the past?

A: Historically, legislators drew the district boundaries in closed meetings, often favoring incumbents or their own party. This Commission is independent and committed to including the voices of all Californians in the process. In addition to holding public hearings throughout the State, the Commission is soliciting citizen participation through its website wedrawthelines.ca.gov as well as new media such as Twitter and Facebook. You will also see Commissioners participating in speaking engagements and educational forums in your local community.

Q. What if the Commission cannot agree on the final redistricting maps?

A. Each of the 14 Commissioners is committed to delivering fair district boundaries. To accomplish that goal the Commission is undertaking a deliberative and open process engaging citizens from every corner of the state. Through that process, and working with all the critical data available, the Commission will have a clear understanding to enable them to draw the lines and agree to final maps.

In the unlikely scenario that the Commission does not come to agreement on final district boundaries the matter goes directly to the California Supreme Court which will appoint three masters to draw the lines.

Q. What happens if there is a legal challenge to the district maps adopted by the Commission?

A. The Act provides that any legal challenge is sent straight to the California Supreme Court for review. This provision was written to expedite any legal challenge straight to the state's highest court so a decision could be made on the maps in time for the June 2012 elections.

6. Who are the Commissioners?

BIOS

7. Special Thanks

Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals for providing advice and assistance in putting this ToolKit together: